

CHAPTER NO. 647

HOUSE BILL NO. 2350

By Representative Sands

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 2412

By Senator Crutchfield

AN ACT to enact the Uniform Trade Secrets Act.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Short Title. This act shall be known and may be cited as "The Uniform Trade Secrets Act".

SECTION 2. Definitions. As used in this act, unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) "Improper means" includes theft, bribery, misrepresentation, breach or inducement of a breach of a duty to maintain secrecy or limit use, or espionage through electronic or other means.

(2) "Misappropriation" means:

(A) Acquisition of a trade secret of another by a person who knows or has reason to know that the trade secret was acquired by improper means; or

(B) Disclosure or use of a trade secret of another without express or implied consent by a person who:

(i) Used improper means to acquire knowledge of the trade secret; or

(ii) At the time of disclosure or use, knew or had reason to know that his or her knowledge of the trade secret was:

(a) Derived from or through a person who had utilized improper means to acquire it;

(b) Acquired under circumstances giving rise to a duty to maintain its secrecy or limit its use; or

(c) Derived from or through a person who owed a duty to the person seeking relief to maintain its secrecy or limit its use; or

(iii) Before a material change of his or her position, knew or had reason to know that it was a trade secret and that knowledge of it had been acquired by accident or mistake.

(3) "Person" means a natural person, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, joint venture, government, governmental subdivision or agency, or any other legal or commercial entity.

(4) "Trade secret" means information, without regard to form, including, but not limited to, technical, nontechnical or financial data, a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, process, or plan that:

(A) Derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use, and

(B) Is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

SECTION 3. Injunctive Relief.

(a) Actual or threatened misappropriation may be enjoined. Upon application to the court an injunction shall be terminated when the trade secret has ceased to exist, but the injunction may be continued for an additional reasonable period of time in appropriate circumstances for reasons including, but not limited to, an elimination of the commercial advantage that otherwise would be derived from the misappropriation, deterrence of willful and malicious misappropriation, or where the trade secret ceases to exist due to the fault of the enjoined party or others by improper means.

(b) In exceptional circumstances, an injunction may condition future use upon payment of a reasonable royalty for no longer than the period of time for which use could have been prohibited. Exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, a material and prejudicial change of position prior to acquiring knowledge or reason to know of misappropriation that renders a prohibitive injunction inequitable.

(c) In appropriate circumstances, affirmative acts to provide a trade secret may be compelled by court order.

SECTION 4. Damages.

(a) In addition to or in lieu of the relief provided by Section 3, a complainant is entitled to recover damages for misappropriation except to the extent that defendant can show a material and prejudicial change of position prior to acquiring knowledge or reason to know of misappropriation and such renders a monetary recovery inequitable. Damages can include both the actual loss caused by misappropriation and the unjust enrichment caused by misappropriation that is not taken into account in computing actual loss. In lieu of damages measured by any other methods, the damages caused by misappropriation may be measured by imposition of liability for a reasonable royalty for a misappropriator's unauthorized disclosure or use of a trade secret.

(b) If willful and malicious misappropriation exists, the court may award exemplary damages in an amount not exceeding twice any award made under subsection (a).

SECTION 5. Attorney's Fees. If:

(1) A claim of misappropriation is made in bad faith,

(2) A motion to terminate an injunction is made or resisted in bad faith,
or

(3) Willful and malicious misappropriation exists, the court may award reasonable attorney's fees to the prevailing party.

SECTION 6. Preservation of Secrecy. In an action under this act, a court shall preserve the secrecy of an alleged trade secret by reasonable means, which may include granting protective orders in connection with discovery proceedings, holding in-camera hearings, sealing the records of the action, and ordering any person involved in the litigation not to disclose an alleged trade secret without prior court approval.

SECTION 7. Statute of Limitations. An action for misappropriation must be brought within three (3) years after the misappropriation is discovered or by the exercise of reasonable diligence should have been discovered. For the purposes of this section, a continuing misappropriation by any person constitutes a single claim against that person, but this section shall be applied separately to any claim against each other person who receives a trade secret from another person who misappropriated that trade secret.

SECTION 8. Effect on Other Law.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), this act displaces conflicting tort, restitutionary, and other law of this state providing civil remedies for misappropriation of a trade secret.

(b) This act does not affect:

(1) Contractual remedies, whether or not based upon misappropriation of a trade secret; provided, however, a contractual duty to maintain secrecy or limit use of a trade secret shall not be deemed to be void or unenforceable solely for lack of durational or geographical limitation on the duty; or

(2) Other civil remedies that are not based upon misappropriation of a trade secret; or

(3) Criminal remedies, whether or not based upon misappropriation of a trade secret.

(c) In no event shall a written contract be required to maintain an action or recover damages for misappropriation of a trade secret proven under this act.

SECTION 9. Uniformity of Application and Construction. This act shall be applied and construed to effectuate its general purpose to make consistent the law with respect to the subject of this act among states enacting it.

SECTION 10. Severability. If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are severable.


SECTION 11. Effective Date. This act takes effect on July 1, 2000, the public welfare requiring it, and does not apply to misappropriation occurring prior to the effective date. With respect to a continuing misappropriation that began prior to the effective date, the act also does not apply to the continuing misappropriation that occurs after the effective date.

PASSED: March 30, 2000


JIMMY RAIFEH, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES


JOHN S. WILDER
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 10th day of April 2000


DON CONQUIST, GOVERNOR